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The Brain Brief - Vol. 3, No. 2

December 2006

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Message from the Scientific Director



Dr. Remi Quirion, Ph.D, FRSC, CQ
Scientific Director


Happy New Year to all! Approaching the end of 2006 has made me realize that this year has been by far the most challenging since I took on the role as Scientific Director of INMHA. The members of the INMHA staff are no strangers to challenge and to busy schedules but the last few months have been unusual for all of us. As I mentioned at our most recent Institute Advisory Board meeting in Saskatoon, it seems that the less dollars you have and the fewer decisions you are allowed to make, the more meetings you have to attend and the more documents you have to produce!

While there is no shortage of need or opportunity, our budget is decreasing. The challenge is to keep the momentum going and to achieve financial stability and growth. The INMHA stakeholder community, scientists and voluntary organizations alike, has worked hard to advocate for the implementation of the recommendations outlined in the report of the Standing Senate Committee on Mental Health and Addiction released in May. This includes the establishment of a Canadian Mental Health Commission and increased funding for mental health research. Thank you to all who continue to help push these recommendations forward.

Another challenge is that we have to evaluate the effectiveness of our programs while it is too early to measure real success. It is important that we balance the recommendations of the International Review Panel (see <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/31689.html>) with the feedback from our stakeholders. We need to establish an ongoing process for unbiased evaluation and continuous planning in partnership with our community. I cannot emphasize enough the importance of the input from our large and varied INMHA stakeholder community - our excellent scientists and young trainees and our passionate NGO/VHO partners. We need your continued contributions to demonstrate scientific excellence and your wisdom to ensure that the funds entrusted in INMHA are spent in the most effective and accountable way.

I will shortly seek your input again and feedback on our draft Strategic Plan for the coming four years. Here again, we will need to take into account the International Review Panel report and the Stakeholder consultation. The outcome of our recent special request for stakeholder input on "Unique Challenges for Research on Sensory and Communication Disorders - the Next Ten Years" will also inform the planning process and possible development of Requests for Applications.

Your input and support is essential to our work and to my effectiveness as leader of this Institute. It is with cautious enthusiasm that I have recently accepted the extension of my term for an additional four-year term, ending in 2010. I would not be here without your support to date and I could certainly not envision the challenges ahead without it!

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Current and Ongoing Funding Opportunities

INMHA Priority Announcement - CIHR Operating Grant Competition

INMHA is committed to supporting excellent researchers in a robust research environment. The purpose of this Priority announcement is to maintain scientific expertise by offering one year operating funding to highly ranked researchers not funded in the regular CIHR competition. It is expected that this focused investment will lead to their success in subsequent competitions. Details for the INMHA Priority Announcement can be found at <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/32737.html>

China-Canada Joint Health Research Initiative

This joint program with the National Natural Science Foundation of China (NSFC) is to support collaborative research projects between Canadian and Chinese researchers. The second annual competition will close on March 1, 2007. Canadian PI's must register by February 15, 2007. Full program details are available at <http://www.irsc.gc.ca/e/32848.html>. For further information, please contact Astrid Eberhart at aeberhart@cihr-irsc.gc.ca.

Joint Program Announcements with US National Institutes of Health (NIH):

Biology of Manual Therapies

<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-06-312.html>

This initiative is led by the National Centre for Complementary and Alternative Medicine (NCCAM) and includes four additional NIH partners and the CIHR Institute of Musculoskeletal Health and Arthritis. The PA is active until 2009, soliciting grants on the regular NIH grant cycle timeline with three competitions per year.

Shared Neurobiology of Fragile X Syndrome and Autism


<http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-05-108.html>

This PA was published in May 2005 and is a public-private partnership led by the National Institute of Mental Health. It includes two other NIH institutes (NINDS and NICHD), the Health Research Board of Ireland, Autism Speaks (NAAAR, CAN), the FRAXA Research Foundation and one other CIHR Institute - the Institute of Genetics. The Fragile X Foundation of Canada is a secondary partner to INMHA and will consider co-funding for Canadian projects on a case-per-case basis. The PA is active until 2008, soliciting grants on the regular NIH grant cycle timeline with three competitions per year.

Brain Disorders in the Developing World: Research Across the Lifespan - Joint PA

<http://grants1.nih.gov/grants/guide/pa-files/PA-05-100.html>

This Program Announcement was published in May and is a re-launch of the 2003 RFA led by the Fogarty International Centre (FIC). The PA is active for three years and is a partnership including 9 other NIH partners and Autism Speaks (NAAR).

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External Funding Opportunities

Stem Cell Network: Open Call for Letters of Intent for Core Proposals

The Stem Cell Network has announced an open call for Letters of Intent for Core Proposals. The deadline for submission is January 15, 2007. For details, consult the Stem Cell Network's web site at <http://www.stemcellnetwork.ca/funding/coregrants.php>

Ontario Neurotrauma Foundation: Graduate Studentships in Health Services Research and Spinal Cord Injury

Information on this funding initiative can be found on the ONF website by clicking on the December link: <http://www.onf.org/Research/announcementsearch.aspx>

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Funding Announcements

China-Canada Joint Health Research Initiative

The results of the first joint competition under this initiative were announced in early November. In total, 15 joint grants were made including 3 below from INMHA, out of 102 eligible applications including 23 for INMHA. The full list of grants is available at <http://www.irsc.gc.ca/e/32655.html>.

- William Baldrige (Dalhousie University), Chinese collaborator: Shigang He (Chinese Academy of Sciences, Shanghai): *Functional differences of two types of horizontal cells in visual information processing in the mammalian retina*
- Serge Brochu (University of Montreal), Chinese collaborator: Lin Lu (Peking University): *Opioid Dependence Treatment: A Comparative Study between Canada and China*
- Min Zhuo (University of Toronto), Chinese collaborator: Bao-Ming Li (Fudan University): *Prefrontal Mechanisms of Cognitive Memory in Mice and Monkeys*

Social Neuroscience

This RFA was a partnership with the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) and two other NIH Institutes - the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA) and the National Institute on Aging (NIA). The focus of the initiative was on cognitive/behavioural processes and neurological mechanisms of social behaviour relevant to alcohol and drug abuse and decision making and judgment over the life course. The following grant will be jointly funded by INMHA and NIDA:

- Leslie Fellows (McGill University): *Orbitofrontal and striatal mechanisms in stress and addiction*

NGO Outreach Award

This initiative offers awards of up to \$10,000 for innovative promotional ideas that help bridge the communications gap between science and the general public. The third competition held jointly with the Institute of Gender and Health, attracted 13 applications and resulted in three awards:

- Canadian Women's Health Network
- Parkinson's Society of Southern Alberta
- NeuroScience Canada

Anxiety and Depression Research Initiative

This initiative at the University of Saskatchewan is supported by a special funding partnership including AstraZeneca Canada Inc., the Royal University Hospital Foundation, the University of Saskatchewan and College of Medicine, and INMHA. The five-year research program, based within the U of S Neuropsychiatry Research Unit (NRU), will look at the underlying causes of anxiety and depression using cellular and animal models. Researchers will also look at better ways to diagnose these disorders, study how new and existing drugs work alone and in combination with others, and assess treatment outcomes. The project is led by NRU director Xin-Min Li and involves a multidisciplinary team of seven University of Saskatchewan researchers.

Regenerative Medicine and Nanomedicine Initiative (RMNI): Year 2006 Decisions

Results of the June 2005 RMNI RFA (Team Grants and New Discoveries: High Risk Seed Grants) will be available on the CIHR website shortly. For more information, please contact Eric Marcotte, Associate Director of RMNI (emarcotte@cihr-irsc.gc.ca), or visit the RMNI homepage: <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/29542.html>.

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Special Awards

Barbara Turnbull Award for Spinal Cord Research


The winner of the 2006 Barbara Turnbull Award is Dr. Pierre Drapeau from the University of Montreal, for his work on spinal cord development in zebrafish embryos. Dr. Drapeau's award marked the fifth anniversary of this special partnership program with the Barbara Turnbull Foundation and NeuroScience Canada, celebrated in a ceremony held at the University of Montreal on December 1. Presenting the award, Barbara Turnbull spoke of her continued commitment to recognizing and supporting excellence in spinal cord research. Inez Jabalpurwala, President of NeuroScience Canada in turn recognized Barbara Turnbull for her courage and commitment, while Rémi Quirion praised the award program as an excellent model for partnership and the key focus on basic research.

In an effort to highlight and to celebrate this successful program, the 2007 INMHA Annual Meeting (see Upcoming Events) will include a mini-symposium featuring the past winners of the award.

Marlene Reimer Brain Star of the Year Award

Marnie Duncan and Marja Van Sickle from the University of Calgary are the joint recipients of the first Marlene Reimer Brain Star of the Year award. The pair of young researchers earned this special recognition for an article published in Science in October 2005 on the discovery of functional cannabinoid receptors in the brainstem. The supervisor for this project was Keith Sharkey. The official presentation of the award will take place at the 2007 INMHA Annual Meeting.

The Brain Star of the Year Award is named in honour of Marlene Reimer, inaugural member of INMHA's Institute Advisory Board and chair of the IAB Focus Group on Training and Education, who passed away on November 1, 2005. Despite her lengthy illness, she dedicated herself to the work of the Institute and was a passionate advocate for INMHA's training initiatives and the Brain Star Program.

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Meetings and Events

2006 Society for Neuroscience (SfN) Annual Meeting

Since its inception, INMHA has exhibited at the SfN Annual Meetings and participated in and hosted associated events. This years meeting took place in Atlanta, Georgia, from October 14-18. One of the key events for INMHA is the annual business meeting and reception of the Canadian Association for Neuroscience (CAN). Although overall attendance of the SfN meeting was well below that of recent years, the 2006 CAN reception

drew record numbers. Rémi Quirion joined new CAN Vice-president Brian MacVicar on the podium and took questions related to INMHA. Not surprisingly, the current CIHR budget crisis ranked top of the list of topics for members of the audience. Another major focus of the CAN event was the announcement of the first Canadian neuroscience meeting to be held in Toronto in May 2007 - see Upcoming Events.

Second International Roundtable on Neuroethics

The SfN meeting and its extensive list of attendees from around the globe provide great opportunity for INMHA staff to coordinate a variety of partnership discussions and meetings. In Atlanta, INMHA hosted the second annual International Roundtable on Neuroethics on October 15, 2006. The goal of this roundtable discussion was to formalize an International Network on Neuroethics (INN) and to work toward the establishment of an international research agenda and funding for this field. The discussion was chaired by Rémi Quirion and neuroethicist and INMHA IAB member Judy Illes. Participants came from Canada, US, UK, Italy, Japan and Venezuela and represented a number of important partner organizations (e.g. UK Medical Research Council, NIMH, NIDA, NIAAA, NINDS and the Dana Foundation). The following areas were identified as the high priorities for the network: capacity building (training); neurotechnology (stem cells, drug development, imaging); neuropharmacology; and, public education and professional education, especially in context of the developing world. The next priorities are: pediatric neuroethics (healthy/pathology); health care disparities, resources, research, values; spirituality, trans-cultural views, and belief systems; and, multicultural views and belief systems of brain, health and disease. An open forum meeting of the Network is planned for next year's SfN meeting in San Diego, California.

Neuroethics featured prominently throughout the SfN meeting. Rémi Quirion and Judy Illes co-chaired a symposium entitled "International Frontier of Neuroethics", an initiative that developed from last year's Roundtable. Judy Illes also presented the David Kopf Memorial Lecture on Neuroethics, "Neuroethics, Neurochallenges: A Needs-Based Research Agenda".

A main follow-up item of the 2006 Roundtable is to align the INN with the newly established **Neuroethics Society**. The INN will serve as the international arm of the Society with INMHA as the coordinating body for the network and associated activities. Details of the alignment are expected to be announced on the Neuroethics Society website in the near future: <http://www.neuroethicssociety.org/>. For further information or to request a copy of the 2006 INN Roundtable notes, please contact Astrid Eberhart at aerberhart@cihr-irsc.gc.ca.

Canada-China Joint Workshop on Neurogenetics

This workshop, held in Ottawa on September 29, was organized as part of the China-Canada Joint Health Research Initiative and held in conjunction with the Joint Selection Committee meeting for the funding program. As the lead Institute within CIHR for the program, INMHA coordinated the 17-person and 5-day delegation from China, with the joint workshop as the concluding event.

Neurogenetics was selected by NSFC from a number of proposed themes. The workshop program included alternating presentations from eight Canadian and eight Chinese speakers. Introductions were made by representatives from CIHR, NSFC and the Chinese Embassy. Canadian speakers were matched to Chinese presenters selected by NSFC and in consultation with the Institute of Genetics. The workshop was covered by Canadian and Chinese Canadian media. To request a copy of the workshop program and abstract book, please contact Astrid Eberhart at aerberhart@cihr-irsc.gc.ca.

First Annual Montreal Neuroinflammation Symposium

Submitted by Romain Cayrol, Montreal


The First Annual Montreal Neuroinflammation Symposium was held on May 12, 2006 at the Douglas Hospital. As a product of the CIHR funded Neuroinflammation Strategic Training Program (STIHR Program), the meeting was organized by student trainees with sponsorship from the Canadian Multiple Sclerosis Society and Sarstedt. This event will be an annual event to promote interdisciplinary exchanges, discussions, collaborations and training of scientists within the field of neuroinflammation.

The symposium showcased the latest results from the student trainees in the program. Held in the elegant Douglas Hall at the Douglas Hospital, the symposium featured four sessions of trainee presentations followed by a keynote lecture given by Dr. Remi Quirion, Director of the Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction of the CIHR. The subject of the presentations ranged across a wide spectrum of different disciplines

dealing with neuroinflammation (epidemiology studies, animal models, clinical studies, autoimmunity, CNS cellular biology, schizophrenia, spinal cord injury and more). Awards were given to the best presentations and to the best abstract. Congratulations to the presentation winners Christoph Rummel Ph.D., David Huang M.Sc., Sathy Rajasekharan B.Sc. and the abstract winner Hania Kebir M.Sc. and to all the participants for their excellent work. The evening was capped off with a dinner for all attendees featuring live music provided by the Montreal Neurological Institute very own Blue Monkey Project jazz band.

The interdisciplinary Neuroinflammation Training Program focuses on investigating the bi-directional interactions between the immune system and the central nervous system (CNS). These interactions are important under physiologic (CNS biology, tissue repair, fever induction, etc) and pathologic conditions (autoimmunity, multiple sclerosis, neuroAIDS, etc.). This Montreal based training program is lead by a group of thirteen principal investigators, MD and/or PhD, based in seven institutions affiliated with three Montreal based Universities (McGill, Université de Montréal, Université du Québec à Montréal). Since neuroinflammation contributes to tissue injury and repair in a wide range of situations and diseases, the research interests are diverse and include basic, clinical and population-based research spanning *in vitro* models, animal models and clinical trials. This first symposium was a great success, and plans are well underway to organize and expand the symposium for next year.

Note: We would be happy to print similar meeting reports in our BrainBrief, particularly from students. Please see Request for News Items at the end of this newsletter.

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Upcoming Events

**Canadian Embassy in Washington
Special Event on Brain Research**
Washington, DC, February 15, 2007

INMHA has been invited to participate in a special event to be hosted by the Canadian Embassy in Washington to discuss the need for increased funding for brain research between USA and Canada.

Workplace Mental Health & Addiction: Research, Knowledge & Action
Vancouver, May 17-18, 2007

This is the second in what will become an annual series of conferences on workplace mental health. Sponsors are the BC Mental Health & Addiction Services, the Centre for Applied Research in Mental Health and Addiction, the Faculty of Health Sciences at Simon Fraser University, and CIHR Institutes INMHA, Institute of Population and Public Health, and Institute of Gender and Health.

Call for Abstracts: Researchers, service providers, employers, unions and business representatives are invited to submit abstracts for oral presentations or poster sessions by **January 15, 2007**, to abstracts@carmha.ca. Priority will be given to proposals with an emphasis on action-oriented research, including emphasis on existing policies, programs and interventions relating to: best practices; employer implementation of programs; tools and resources; addiction issues; and knowledge translation. Abstracts from researchers involved in partnerships with workplace stakeholders, employer, employees, or unions are encouraged. Abstracts in both French and English are welcome. Information: Dr. Joti Samra - 604-291-5263, jsamra@sfu.ca, or see <http://www.carmha.ca/conferences/2007/workplace/>.

**First Annual Meeting of Canadian Association for Neuroscience /
Fifth INMHA Annual Meeting**
Toronto, May 22-25, 2007

INMHA will mark the fifth anniversary of its Annual Meeting by joining forces with CAN to host this landmark neuroscience event. The INMHA Annual Meeting will be held on May 22-23, with the second day to be organized jointly with CAN. Our Annual Meeting will largely follow the successful format of previous years including three major panel discussions and a partnership session. Topics will include anxiety, hearing and spinal cord injury (session on Barbara Turnbull Award). The CAN meeting will include plenary sessions,

symposia and poster presentations. The meeting will also comprise the Annual Meeting of the Southern Ontario Neuroscience Association and will serve as part of the first North American International Brain Research Organization (IBRO) Neuroscience School (see announcement below). Further information will be distributed by INMHA and will also be available on the CAN website: <http://www.can-acn.org/>

First Canadian IBRO Neuroscience School: Fundamentals of Epilepsy Toronto, May 22-June 1, 2007

The International Brain Research Organization (IBRO) invites applications for the First Canadian IBRO Neuroscience School to be held in association with the joint meeting of the Canadian Association for Neuroscience (CAN) and the Institute of Neurosciences, Mental Health and Addiction (INMHA) of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR). The School is also sponsored by the SfN and the National Academy of Sciences of the US, which together with CAN and INMHA are members of the North American Regional Committee of IBRO. It will provide young promising trainees from Africa and South America the experience of attending a scientific meeting, followed by a one-week specialized neuroscience school in Toronto, Canada. The focus of the School is to introduce the basic mechanism related to the clinical phenomena, therapeutics, and social impact of epilepsy. In addition, the students with specific interests will have the opportunity to visit a laboratory for a few days to weeks following the school, in Toronto and possibly elsewhere in Canada.

The School will include a series of lectures, case presentations, a journal club and general education sessions for scientists (e.g. grant writing) as well as lab demonstrations of *in vitro* and *in vivo* experimentation. Students will be expected to present a poster at the CAN-INMHA meeting and will be encouraged to participate actively in discussions and other school activities. Course applicants should be fluent in English (written/spoken), have a degree in basic or clinical sciences and a familiarity with basic neurophysiology and other disciplines closely related to the main subject of the school. Students will be selected on the basis of their academic records, publications and written statements concerning their interest in Neuroscience and what they expect to get out of the School and optional lab visits. The number of students is limited to 15 so that student selection will be competitive and based on the information provided. Priority will be given to IBRO alumni. The School will support travel expenses, registration cost for the CAN-INMHA meeting, meals and accommodation expenses. Lab visits will be sponsored separately. Applications should be made on-line via the IBRO website at <http://schools.ibro.info/> by January 29, 2007.

INMHA-IBRO Neuroscience Schools

INMHA continues to be a proud sponsor of the IBRO Neuroscience School Program. In addition to assisting with the organization of the Toronto School, INMHA co-funds two neuroscience schools every year, in Africa and South Africa. The selection of schools to receive support from INMHA is made by IBRO. 2007 Schools will be listed on the IBRO website at http://www.ibro.org/Pub_Main_Display.asp?Main_ID=185.

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INMHA Institute Advisory Board

Comings and Goings

The annual CIHR Institute Advisory Board (IAB) renewal process for ensures a regular turn-over of members on the 13 IABs. The most recent renewal has brought six new members and changed the face of the INMHA Board, with Chair Tony Phillips remaining as the sole "survivor" of the inaugural INMHA Board. We said a reluctant good-bye to Martin Steinbach, Eric Single, Alain Lesage and Kathryn Bennett. We also had the sad task of filling the vacancy left by the late Marlene Reimer. Another spot opened by the resignation of Serge Brochu who felt he could no longer serve effectively after accepting a new appointment as vice-dean at the University of Montreal.

We extend a warm welcome to the following new members: Isabelle Brunette from the University of Montreal, Jacques Bradwejn from the University of Ottawa, Claude Rocan from the Public Health Agency of Canada, Kathleen Hegadoren from the University of Alberta, Benedikt Fisher from the University of Victoria and Louise Nadeau from the University of Montreal. IAB biographies are available on the INMHA website at <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/24505.html>.

November 2006 IAB Meeting


Saskatoon, November 17-18, 2006

The most recent meeting of the INMHA IAB was hosted by the University of Saskatchewan. In honour of the IAB's visit, the University organized a special symposium highlighting neuroscience Research at the University of Saskatchewan, as well as a reception and poster session. The IAB agenda also included a tour of the Canadian Light Source and presentations on health services research.

March 2007 IAB Meeting

London, Ontario, March 2-3, 2007

The next meeting of the IAB will be hosted by the University of London. The agenda will include a reception/information session to provide researchers and students at the University to meet IAB members and INMHA staff. IAB member Ravi Menon has agreed to act as local coordinator for the meeting.

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Request for New Items

Please let us know of any upcoming news-worthy research publications or other news, including external funding opportunities or special initiatives that may be of interest to our readers. Information should be forwarded to Astrid Eberhart at aeberhart@cihr-irsc.gc.ca.

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